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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

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TAGS: SHUM, PINT, AR
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS ALLEGE EXISTENCE
OF CEMETERIES CONTAINING BODIES OF DISAPPEARED

1. SUMMARY: HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS HAVE DENOUNCED
THE EXISTENCE IN THE BUENOS AIRES AREA OF
LARGE NOS. OF UNMARKED GRAVES CONTAINING THE
BODIES OF DISAPPEARED. THE CLAIM STEMS FROM
THE DISCOVER OF 88 UNMARKED COMMON GRAVES IN
THE TOWN OF GRAND BOURG, NEAR BUENOS AIRES. IN
ARGENTINA, UNMARKED COMMON BURIAL IS CUSTOMARY
FOR BODIES WHICH ARE UNCLAIMED BY FAMILY MEMBERS
OR UNIDENTIFIED. ONE OF THE COMMON GRAVES RE-
PORTEDLY CONTAINED THE REMAINS OF A MAN WHO DIS-
APPEARED IN MAY 1976 AND WHOSE PARENTS WERE TOLD
OF HIS BURIAL PLACE ALMOST FIVE YEARS LATER BY
THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. HUMAN RIGHTS SPOKES-
MEN SAY THAT THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 400 BODIES
IN 88 UNMARKED GRAVES AT GRAND BOURG

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AND THAT THERE ARE SIMILAR UNMARKED BURIAL SITES
IN FIVE OTHER LOCATIONS IN THE GREATER BUENOS

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AIRES AREA. THEY ARE CALLING FOR INVESTIGATIONS INTO WHO IS BURIED AT THESE SITES, WHO ORDERED THE BURIALS AND HOW THE INDIVIDUALS DIED. END SUMMARY.

2. ON OCTOBER 22, HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS DENOUNCED BEFORE A JUDGE AND IN A PRESS CONFERENCE THE EXISTENCE OF WHAT THEY CLAIMED ARE THE REMAINS OF 400 PRESUMED DISAPPEAREDS IN UNMARKED GRAVES AT A "CLANDESTINE" SECTION OF A CEMETERY NEAR A MAJOR ARMY BASE (CAMPO DE MAYO, THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF'S MILITARY BASE HEADQUARTERS) ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BUENOS AIRES.

3. ACCORDING TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, THE MOTHER OF PLAZA DE MAYO AND THE FAMILIES OF DISAPPEAREDS/DETAINEES FOR POLITICAL REASONS, THEY DISCOVERED THE GRAVESITES LAST WEEK WHEN A DISAPPEARED'S PARENTS, WHO RECEIVED NOTICE OF THE LOCATION OF THEIR SON'S BODY FROM THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, DECIDED TO HAVE HIM EXHUMED AND TAKEN TO ANOTHER CEMETERY. UPON REMOVAL OF THE REMAINS, THE PARENTS DISCOVERED THAT THEIR SON, MIGUEL ANGEL SOSA, WAS BURIED TOGETHER WITH THREE OTHER INDIVIDUALS, ALL IN CARDBOARD COFFINS. IN THAT PART OF THE CEMETERY, WHICH IS SOME DISTANCE FROM FREQUENTED AREAS OF THE GRAVEYARD, THERE ARE REPORTEDLY 87 OTHER SUCH UNMARKED GRAVES AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS CLAIM THAT CEMETERY RECORDS INDICATE THAT THE 88 GRAVES CONTAIN AP-
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PROXIMATELY 400 BODIES, ALL LISTED ANONIMOUSLY AS "N.N." THE MAYOR OF THE TOWN ADMITTED ON OCTOBER 26 THAT THERE ARE AT LEAST 300 BODIES IN THE UNMARKED AREA OF THE GRAVEYARD. RESPONDING TO DEMANDS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS, THE LOCAL COURT HAS SEIZED CEMETERY RECORDS ON THE "N.N". AND THE MAYOR OF THE LOCALITY HAS GIVEN ASSURANCES THAT NO "N.N." BODIES WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE AREA. HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS ARE DEMANDING AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ORIGIN OF THE UNMARKED AREA, THE NAMES OF THOSE BURIED, WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BURIALS AND UNDER WHAT CON-

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DITIONS THE INDIVIDUALS DIED. HUMAN RIGHTS
SPOKESMEN AFFIRM THAT SIMILAR, SUSPICIOUS, UN-
MARKED GRAVEYARDS EXIST IN FIVE OTHER AREAS OF
BUENOS AIRES.

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4. A ACCORDING TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS SPOKESMAN, THE
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR INFORMED THE PARENTS OF SOSA,
REPORTEDLY A LABOR ACTIVIST, IN FEB 1981 THAT
THEIR SON'S BODY WAS FOUND FLOATING IN THE RECON-
JUSTA RIVER NEAR BUENOS AIRES ON MAY 26, 1976.
(SOSA DISAPPEARED ON MAY 25, 1976). THE MINISTRY
REPORTEDLY TOLD THE PARENTS THAT HIS BODY WAS AT
THE GRAND BOURG CEMETERY IN A COMMON, UNMARKED
GRAVE, WHICH IS THE CUSTOMARY BURIAL PROVIDED BY
THE STATE FOR BODIES WHICH ARE UNIDENTIFIED OR
NO ONE CLAIMS, SUCH AS INDIGENTS OR CRIMINALS.
NO EXPLANATION WAS GIVEN TO THE FAMILY WHY AL-
MOST FIVE YEARS ELAPSED BEFORE SOSA'S PARENTS
WERE INFORMED. THE PARENTS DECIDED TO REMOVE THE
BODY TO A CITY CEMETERY WHEN THEY DISCOVERED
RECENTLY A SIGN NEAR THE GRAVESITE INDICATING THAT
ALL THE BODIES IN THAT AREA WOULD BE REMOVED TO A
COMMON GRAVE AT ANOTHER LOCATION.

. THE UNMARKED GRAVESITE AREA OF THE CEMETERY,

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ACCORDING TO HUMAN RIGHTS SPOKESMEN, CITING PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE VICINITY, WAS FIRST ESTABLISHED ON MAY 28, 1976, AND THE BODIES WERE ALLEGEDLY BROUGHT IN GROUPS AT NIGHT ABOARD TRUCKS BELONGING TO THE SECURITY FORCES. THIS WAS DENIED BY ONE OF THE GRAVEDIGGERS AT THE CEMETERY, WHO SAID ALL THE BODIES WERE BROUGHT IN DURING THE DAY IN NORMAL FUNERAL VANS. THE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS DISMISS THE POSSIBILITY THAT MORE THAN A HANDFUL OF THE 400 ALLEGEDLY BURIED AT GRAND BOURGH COULD BE INDIGENTS, CRIMINALS OR OTHER WHOSE BODIES COULD NOT BE IDENTIFIED BY COMPETENT AUTHORITIES SOON AFTER DISCOVERY IN ORDER TO ADVISE THEIR RESPECTIVE FAMILIES.

6. THUS FAR, NO RANKING GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAS MADE ANY STATEMENTS ABOUT THE GRAND BOURG GRAVEYARD. ON OCTOBER 26, HUMAN RIGHTS SPOKESMEN EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER INDICATIONS THEY SAY THEY DETECT THAT THE LOCAL JUDGE WHO SEIZE CEMETERY RECORDS WILL DECLARE HIMSELF INCOMPETENT TO HANDLE THE CASE AND TURN OVER RESPONSIBILITY TO THE NATIONAL MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS DOUBT WILL INVESTIGATE FULLY.
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